



Bulletin

Parents Learning About Children's Education



Sup't Payzant Addresses Parent Involvement in Boston Public Schools

The September 2000 Bulletin reported on the response made by Boston Public School (BPS) Superintendent, Thomas Payzant, to the recommendations gathered from ten Community Education Summits over the past two years. Led by the Black Ministerial Alliance (BMA), the Summits offer parents and community members a bi-monthly opportunity to discuss educational issues and concerns directly with the Superintendent and other BPS staff. The BMA compiled information from these ongoing forums into a final document of parent recommendations, which was presented to Superintendent Payzant at a Summit meeting in May 2000. The recommendations addressed concerns in four areas: supports for students; parent involvement; hiring, training, and accountability; and testing requirements.

The previous issue focused primarily on Superintendent Payzant's response to parent's recommendations for "Supports for Students." This issue takes a closer look at Payzant's responses to "Parent Involvement" recommendations.

1. The first Parent Involvement recommendation stated that BPS needs to develop clear policies to engage parents and to communicate better with them. Parents

are concerned because they believe that the Superintendent and the school system are not communicating that they are seriously committed to involving parents in schools and school-site councils.

Schools, families, and community must work together as knowledgeable, mutually respectful partners to support the children of the Boston Public Schools.

—BPS Parent Involvement Policy

In his response, Payzant stated that "BPS has clear policies on parent involvement" and that the problem was not a lack of policy but rather that "schools have been uneven in their implementation." For the 2000-2001 school year, Payzant promised to increase efforts to improve implementation of existing policy and hold BPS staff accountable.

Payzant emphasized BPS' current parent involvement efforts and initiatives. He pointed out that Focus on Children (BPS's strategic plan) includes parent and community engagement as one of four district goals. He then emphasized that, in 1997, the School Committee approved a comprehensive Parent/Family Involvement Policy that requires every school to develop a School-Family Compact outlining the responsibilities of administrators, teachers, and parents. He further stated that every school has a School-Site Council and, that almost all schools have School Parent Councils. In addition, the School Committee has established a Family and Community Engagement Task Force to review issues in parent/family involvement and communications and to make recommendations for improvement. The Task Force is scheduled to report to the School Committee in the near future.

2. The second recommendation called for teachers and principals to participate in staff development workshops on parent involvement in order to learn respectful ways to engage parents.

Payzant responded by quoting the Parent Involvement Policy which states, in part: "Schools, families, and community must work together as knowledgeable, mutually respectful partners to support the children of the Boston Public Schools." He added, "BPS is committed to respectful treatment of parents and families and will include parent involvement in the professional development program for Principals and Headmasters next school year."

3. The final recommendation suggested that principals and teachers be evaluated on how effectively they engage parents in the education of their children and plans for their schools. It also stated that BPS staff must be held accountable for implementing parent participation policies, if these policies are to be treated seriously and implemented effectively.

Payzant responded, "BPS has not provided sufficient accountability for schools for implementing the Parent Involvement Policy.

Fresh Ideas for a Fresh Start in Dorchester

On September 9, 2000, Parents' PLACE and the Federation's Community Outreach and Empowerment (COEP) Project¹ co-sponsored an all-day conference for families at the ABCD Elm Hill Family Service Center in Dorchester.

Back to School: Fresh Ideas for a Fresh Start offered presentations and workshops for families in both English and Spanish. Topics addressed throughout the day included multiple intelligences, self esteem for children and parents, homework issues, effective communications skills, and, for parents of children with special needs, individualized education plans (IEPs).

Sixty-two parents, professionals, children and staff participated in the conference. Thanks to everyone who was willing to give up a busy Saturday to show their dedication to improving educational outcomes for children. The day was a huge success!

1. Funded by the Boston Foundation, C.O.E.P. is dedicated to serving the needs of Boston area families of children with behavioral and emotional disorders and/or learning disabilities. Their services are provided in English and Spanish, are offered free of charge, and include monthly family support groups, information and referral, and phone support. For more information, call the Federation at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688.

Helping Your Child Learn Math

Math is an important skill which we all need in this technological world. People can no longer get by with only the basic computational skills they needed in the 1940s. Now workers need to be able to estimate, to communicate mathematically, and to reason within a mathematical context. Employees also need to have quick reasoning and problem-solving skills and the capability to solve problems together. The work force needs to be confident in math.

Math is a subject for all people. Math is not a subject that men do better than women. Males and females have equally strong potential in math. It is important for you to encourage your children to think of themselves as mathematicians who can reason and solve problems.



How Do You Feel About Math?

Your feelings will have an impact on how children think about math and themselves as mathematicians. Take a few minutes to answer these questions:

- Did you like math in school?
- Do you think anyone can learn math?
- Do you think math is useful in everyday life?
- Do you believe that most jobs today require math skills?

If you answer “yes” to most of these questions, then you are probably encouraging your child to think mathematically. This article contains some ideas and activities that will help you reinforce these positive attitudes toward math.

Math on the Go

In this busy world, we spend a lot of time in transit. These are some projects to try while you are going from place to place.

While you’re moving, have your children keep their eyes open for:

- Street and building numbers;
- Phone numbers on the side of taxis;
- Dates on buildings and monuments; and
- Business names that have numbers in them.

Number Search Activity

This is a great challenge for family members of all ages because even young children can learn to recognize numbers.

Object: To look for numbers around you – on cars, buses, subways, and on foot.

You Need: Some type of transportation or a place from which to observe, paper, pencil, ruler.

What to do:

1. Create a chart that lists the numbers 1-50.
2. Write down each number as family members locate that number on a car, sign, or building.
3. Write down words that have numbers in them such as “one-stop shopping,” “two-day service,” or “Highway 20”.

License Plates Activity

These activities encourage reading, recognizing numbers, noticing symbols, writing, counting, and graphing.

You need: license plates, paper, pencil

What to do:

1. Copy down a license plate. Read it as a number (excluding the letters). For example, if the license is 663N218, the number would be six hundred sixty-three thousand, two hundred eighteen.
2. Find other license plates and read their numbers. Is the number less than, greater than, or equal to yours?
3. Estimate the difference between your number and another license plate. Is it 10, 100, 1,000, or 10,000?
4. Record the names of the states of as many different license plates as you see. From which state do you see the most? Which has the fewest? Prepare a chart or graph to show your findings.

Excerpted from Helping Your Child Learn Math with permission from the U.S. Department of Education. For your own copy of Helping Your Child Learn Math, visit www.ed.gov or contact Parents’ PLACE.

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Get to know what your kids need to know about math

With education reform efforts taking place throughout the state, it’s important for parents to become familiar with the education standards set in Massachusetts. Called Curriculum Frameworks, these standards are currently available in mathematics, science and technology, English language arts, history and social sciences, and foreign languages. The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) bases its tests on the frameworks.

Here’s an example from the Math Framework, on Statistics and Probability.

For Pre-K – grade 4: Students engage in problem solving, communicating, reasoning, and connecting to: collect, organize, and describe data; construct, read, and interpret displays of data; formulate and solve problems that involve collecting and analyzing data; and explore and describe the concepts of chance.

Example of Student Learning: Students check newspapers and find the time of sunset for Monday through Friday. The data are recorded in a table and a line graph is constructed. Students interpret their graphs and predict the times of sunset for the following week. They record them on the graph in a contrasting color. They check their predictions in the newspaper and discuss their conclusions.

For Grades 5-8: Students engage in problem solving, communicating, reasoning, and connecting to: collect, organize, and describe the data systematically; construct, read and interpret tables, charts, and graphs; make inferences and convincing arguments that are based on data analysis; and develop and explain why statistical methods are powerful aids for decision making.

Example of Student Learning: After reading an article, students interpret the data and evaluate the conclusions expressed by the reporter. Students write letters to the editor, questioning or approving the reporter’s conclusions. Students find other articles that use statistics and their interpretations and discuss them with someone at home.

For a copy of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, call Mass. Department of Education (DOE) at 781-388-3300, visit the DOE website at www.doe.mass.edu, or Parents’ PLACE at www.pplace.org.

PARENTS' PLACE WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOPS FOR FAMILIES

(available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese)

Parents Are Powerful:

A workshop to promote family involvement in education

More than 30 years of research shows that children do better in school when families are involved. **Parents are Powerful** provides an overview of the benefits of parent involvement in children's education, discusses educational standards and what schools are doing to meet them, and summarizes the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and its effects on schools and students. Most importantly, parents learn strategies for maximizing their involvement in their children's education and the key role they play in ensuring their children's success in school.

Parents Are Powerful in American Schools:

A workshop for new immigrant families

School systems around the world vary greatly. **Parents Are Powerful in American Schools** is for families new to the U.S. that are eager to learn about American schools but may not know where to get the information they need. This workshop familiarizes participants with the American school system, including enrollment, the grading system, the differences between public, private, and religious schools and the rights of English-language learners. Most importantly, parents learn strategies for maximizing their involvement in their children's education and the key role they play in ensuring their children's success in school.

Families and Schools Together:

How families can partner with schools to ensure that children receive a quality education

Families and Schools Together provides participants with an understanding of standards-based education reform. This includes what students should know and be able to do in order to meet current standards, what teachers should be teaching, and how students and schools will be assessed. Special emphasis is placed on strategies parents can use with schools to ensure that all students achieve to high standards and receive a quality education. Participants also learn about the educational rights of both students and parents. This workshop is recommended for families and individuals who already have a basic understanding of education reform in Massachusetts.

Raising Student Achievement:

Family Involvement Really Works

Current research indicates that the family makes critical contributions to student achievement. This one-hour workshop explains the different types of family involvement, teaches innovative ways to communicate with parents or teachers, and offers strategies to develop collaborative relationships between families and schools. Parents learn what teachers suggest parents do and parents, in turn, can share their own suggestions for teachers.

Coming soon...

- MCAS: High Standards and High Stakes for Students and Schools

WORKSHOPS FOR SCHOOLS

(available in English)

Raising Student Achievement:

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Creating Family-Friendly Environments in Schools

School personnel will benefit from this workshop which provides information and support on increasing effective interactions between schools and families. Key elements include identifying characteristics of family-friendly schools, developing strategies that support family involvement, and developing a school profile on family-friendly practices in schools. Participants learn how to create a welcoming school environment, build partnerships with parents, and achieve a better understanding of diverse cultures.

Opening the Door to Family-Friendly Schools: Building Partnerships with Families through the Front Office

There is a direct relationship between a pleasant school office environment, happy, friendly staff, and active parent involvement in the schools. This workshop for front office personnel emphasizes the influential role they have in interacting with parents, administration, teachers and other school staff, and identifies effective communication styles and skills that exemplify family-friendly practices.

Coming soon...

- Family Involvement: From Research to Practice

If you would like to schedule a workshop, contact Parents' PLACE staff at 877-471-0980 or 617-236-7210.

For workshops in

English, call T.J. Hutson, ext. 113

Spanish, call Diana Rocha, ext. 171

Portuguese, call Sandy Blanes, ext. 144

Resources for Grandparents

The following grandparenting resources from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Grandparent Information Center are available free through Parents' PLACE:

Tips for Grandparents:

Welfare Reform and Your Family

Useful tips and guidelines for grandparents looking to be involved in welfare reform and how it affects their family. Includes phone numbers and addresses for more help.

Tips for Grandparents:

Starting a Support Group

Answers grandparents' questions on starting a support group, including how to begin,



writing press releases, and phone numbers of pertinent information centers.

Grandparents Raising their Grandchildren: What to consider and where to find help

Main topics include Legal Issues, Financial Issues, Childcare, Medical Care and Insurance, Schooling and Emotional Issues. Contacts for AARP Grandparenting Centers included.

Payzant Responds, continued from page 1

Schools participating in the In-Depth Review process are reviewed on their parent and community involvement. We will include parent involvement as one of the key areas where all Principals and Headmasters are required to establish annual objectives."

There were no Boston Summits held over the summer, but they have started up again! If you would like more information about upcoming Summits, or are interested in reviewing Superintendent Payzant's full response to the Summit Recommendations, please call Angel Simpson, BMA Education Coordinator, at 617-445-2156.

Parents' PLACE seeks to support communities that would like to open dialogue between

parents, community member, and educational leaders around critical issues in education reform. Readers interested in sponsoring Community Education Summits in their own communities should contact Carolyn Romano, at the Parents' PLACE office in Boston, 617-236-7210, x141 or by email at cromano@fcsn.org.

Parents' PLACE also offers workshops that help schools to promote better parent involvement, as well as workshops that help parents become more comfortable with taking an active role in their children's education. Check out our workshop listing on page 3 or call T.J. Hutson, Outreach Coordinator, 617-236-7210, x113 for more information.

Parents' PLACE Resources

These U.S. Department of Education booklets are available free from Parents' PLACE!

Helping Your Child Become a Reader,
January 2000

Helping Your Child Learn Math,
December 1994

Helping Your Child Learn History,
October 1996

Helping Your Child Learn Responsible Behavior,
September 1997

Getting Ready for College Early,
February 4, 1997

Parents Guide to the Internet, November 1997
"Questions Parents Ask About Schools"

The full text of these publications is also available at <http://www.ed.gov/>

Publicações em Português

Proteja a sua criança com as Vacinas . . . Para uma Saúde de Qualidade

Revistinha Educativo, Publicado por o Departamento de Saúde Pública de Massachusetts - Programa de Imunizações

Seu Bebê está se Desenvolvendo Normalmente?
Folheto Educativo, Publicado por o Departamento de Saúde Pública de Massachusetts - Programa de Intervenção Precoce

Healthy Start - Início Saudável- Um programa de Cuidados de Saude para Grávidas
Folheto Educativo, Publicado por o

Departamento de Saúde Pública de Massachusetts - Programa de Saúde Familiar e Comunitário

Recursos en Español

Los siguientes folletos están disponibles en EL CLUB DE LOS PADRES de manera gratuita!

Guía de Servicios de la Ciudad para Nuevos Bostonianos.
Publicado por el Ciudad de Boston, Thomas M. Menino.

Los Niños y la Televisión (Children and Television).

Copiado de <http://www.parenting-ed.org/spanish.htm>

Mejorando Los Hábitos De Estudiar (Improving Study Habits).

Copiado de <http://www.parenting-ed.org/spanish.htm>



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